Objective.—In the 1917 offensive, the Franco-British Armies must aim at the destruction of the principal mass of the enemy armies in the Western theatre. This result can only be obtained by means of a decisive battle, engaged in with a considerable numerical superiority against all the forces at the disposal of the enemy.

Our concern is then :—

To retain as important a part as possible of the adverse forces ;

To break the enemy's front under such conditions that the rupture can be immediately exploited ;

To beat down all the available forces which the enemy can bring against us ;

To exploit with all our means the results of this decisive battle.

Necessary means.—To realise this programme, it is indispensable to have at our disposal, apart from the forces destined at the outset to hold the enemy and break his front, a mass of manoeuvre powerful enough to be certain of beating down all available hostile forces.

I consider that this mass can only be constituted of homogeneous forces possessing full cohesion and trained for their task by commanders who will have to employ them. It follows that these forces could not be made up by drawing on armies charged with the execution of an offensive of attrition or the rupture of the enemy front.

I estimate that a group of three armies, each

consisting of three corps of three divisions apiece is the force necessary for this mass of manoeuvre.

General Shape of the Operations.—Starting from